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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 003166

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA/SOMALIA: IGAD COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
EXTRAORDINARY SESSION READOUT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3145

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The Ethiopian government (GoE) is "more than pleased" with the outcome of the November 18 Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers' Extra-ordinary Session (the Ministerial), according to GoE Special Envoy to Somalia Abdetta Dribssa. Abdetta and, separately, the Ethiopian Chair of the IGAD Secretariat Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie, said IGAD has now sent a clear message to Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Yusuf and others that the region will not tolerate those who obstruct Somali national political reconciliation per the terms of the October 29 Nairobi Declaration and the Djibouti process. Abdetta noted that Ethiopia will stick to its plan to withdraw its forces from Somalia within 45 days (reftel), albeit reluctantly, if it does not receive funding for its operations from the United States or the international community. The next steps to address the Somalia crisis, according to Abdetta, are: 1) the TFG Parliament blessing Prime Minister Nur Adde's Cabinet selections; 2) the Djibouti process restarting after several days, postponement; and 3) the establishment of the Benadir Administration. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Special Envoy for Somalia Abdetta Dribssa briefed PolOff on Ethiopia's perspective on the November 18 IGAD Ministerial held in Addis Ababa. Separately, PolOff attended a briefing for the IGAD Partners Forum by Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie, MFA Director General for Africa and the IGAD Secretariat.

IGAD "Speaks With One Voice" On Somalia

¶3. (C) Ambassador Sahlework said the Ministerial produced a clear IGAD consensus: that the TFG leadership's lack of political commitment to reconciliation is the core problem in Somalia at the moment; that the Nairobi declaration and the Djibouti process must be implemented; that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) must be strengthened; and that Somalia requires a "collective endeavor" by IGAD and the international community. Ethiopia convened the IGAD Ministerial, Sahlework said, because the TFG had already fallen behind the timetable of the October 29 Nairobi Declaration on such key points as cabinet appointments, the

Benadir administration and the joint security council. Sahlework noted that the Ministerial showed that IGAD "speaks with one voice" because the Communique delivered the clear message to TFG leadership that the TFG has failed Somalia and the region. The TFG is still key to the formation of a Government of National Unity with the Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia/Djibouti (ARS), Sahlework added. However, she said, "IGAD has signaled this is not business as usual: either the TFG follows the advice and support from the region, or the region's support will be withdrawn. The TFG has been given one more chance."

Ethiopia "More Than Pleased"

¶4. (C) Abdeta said Ethiopia is "more than pleased" with the outcome of the November 18 Ministerial. Reviewing the IGAD Communique from that meeting, Abdeta identified the final paragraph as the most significant element, as it threatens to delegitimize "spoilers" of the Nairobi Declaration and the Djibouti process. While the provision applies to everyone, Abdeta said it will put pressure on TFG President Yusuf. Ethiopia is now convinced that "Kenya and others clearly see Yusuf as the main obstacle to implementation of the Nairobi Declaration (the October 29 declaration from the Nairobi IGAD Summit)," Abdeta added. He noted that IGAD does have the ability to implement potential travel bans and other sanctions per paragraph 11 of the Communique, noting that Somali leaders can be denied transit through Addis, Nairobi and Djibouti, but "we expect the international community to assist more." Abdeta said the IGAD Chair will nominate a

ADDIS ABAB 00003166 002 OF 003

"facilitator" to implement the provisions of the Communique. Sahlework noted that IGAD would look for other international entities, such as the United Nations, to mirror any sanctions IGAD actually imposes.

Next Steps: Cabinet and Benadir Administration

¶5. (C) According to Abdeta, the next steps to address the Somalia crisis are: 1) the TFG Parliament blessing Nur Adde's Cabinet selections; 2) the Djibouti process restarting after several days, postponement; and 3) the establishment of the Benadir Administration. Abdeta was optimistic about the Benadir administration, noting that "it will happen quickly" because the clans have already selected representation. Abdeta said four flights on Saturday, November 22 will carry TFG MPs from Nairobi to Baidoa (approximately 80 are already there), which means by early next week the necessary quorum of 139 MPs should be in place and Prime Minister Nur Adde will likely present his Cabinet selections to the TFG Parliament. In that event, Abdeta added, Yusuf cannot block the appointments constitutionally. Abdeta remarked that the Ethiopian government has heard that Yusuf may seek to declare Marshall law. "I don't believe he can do it," Abdeta said, adding "he has had his wings clipped and I was told that the militia around the President are no longer influential, which might be a signal that Villa Somalia is not a good place to go." As an aside, Abdeta floated the possibility that the TFG Parliament would impeach Yusuf, emphasizing that "neither Ethiopia nor IGAD has a role (in such proceedings), and the Somalis have to decide for themselves, but Yusuf is an albatross around the neck." Abdeta cautioned, though, that "Yusuf will retain significant influence if Nur Adde and others miscalculate and seek to eliminate the Darod from the government."

Extremists Gain Ground

¶6. (C) Extremist elements in Kismayo are gaining territory and are now within 38 kilometers of Mogadishu, Abdeta said. Abdeta added that Ethiopia is monitoring the situation, but feels it needs TFG (i.e. Yusuf's) support to take action.

Yusuf, however, does not want Ethiopia to "deal with Kismayo," Abdeta said, and "we have to respect his office as president." Of concern, Abdeta noted, is that the extremists appear to be building ties with clan elders as they advance, which would make any TFG/Ethiopian counter-attack more difficult. Moreover, "Yusuf sees the fight as a clan issue, not a terrorist problem," Abdeta said. Abdeta described the Kismayo coalition as "Harti, Ogaden and (some) Marehan extremists," representing a "serious challenge to the future." "We should do something," Abdeta said, "(but) Kismayo is in rains until the end of December and it is up to our military commanders." Sahlework remarked that Ethiopian forces have said that the extremists do not pose a significant threat only so long as Somalia's TFG/ARS political reconciliation proceeds apace. (Note: Ethiopia's Chief of Defense Staff General Samora conveyed the same message to DASD Theresa Whelan in mid-October. End Note.)

45 Day Timetable?

¶ 7. (C) Abdeta hedged when pressed on Ethiopia's commitment to a 45-day timetable for withdrawing its forces from Somalia, emphasizing "We are saying: we will stick to 45 days to have all of our troops out of Somalia." Abdeta said he believes that Ethiopia will need at most two weeks to withdraw all of its troops. Still, Ethiopia "would happily stay if we receive financial support from the international community - but for two years we have been going it alone and we have six million people starving at home." He added that "Somalia is now a threat to everyone. They can hijack an oil tanker with more than USD 100 million in cargo. It would only take USD 25 million to sustain Ethiopia's presence in Somalia a few months. If the United States said, 'Here's USD 50 million, we would extend a couple months no problem.'" Abdeta said that if Ethiopia stays in Somalia, "it will help stability. We can maintain the Djibouti process. We know it will be unhelpful to withdraw, but we have no choice. We don't have

ADDIS ABAB 00003166 003 OF 003

the resources." Sahlework said that Uganda has made it clear that for AMISOM to stay after Ethiopia's withdrawal, the force must be strengthened considerably and in advance.

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